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# OTHERS

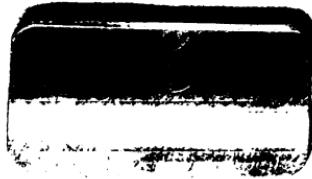
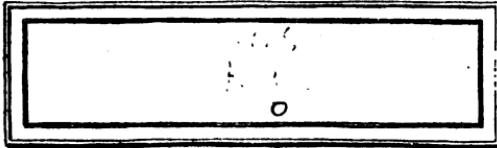
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THE NEW VERSE

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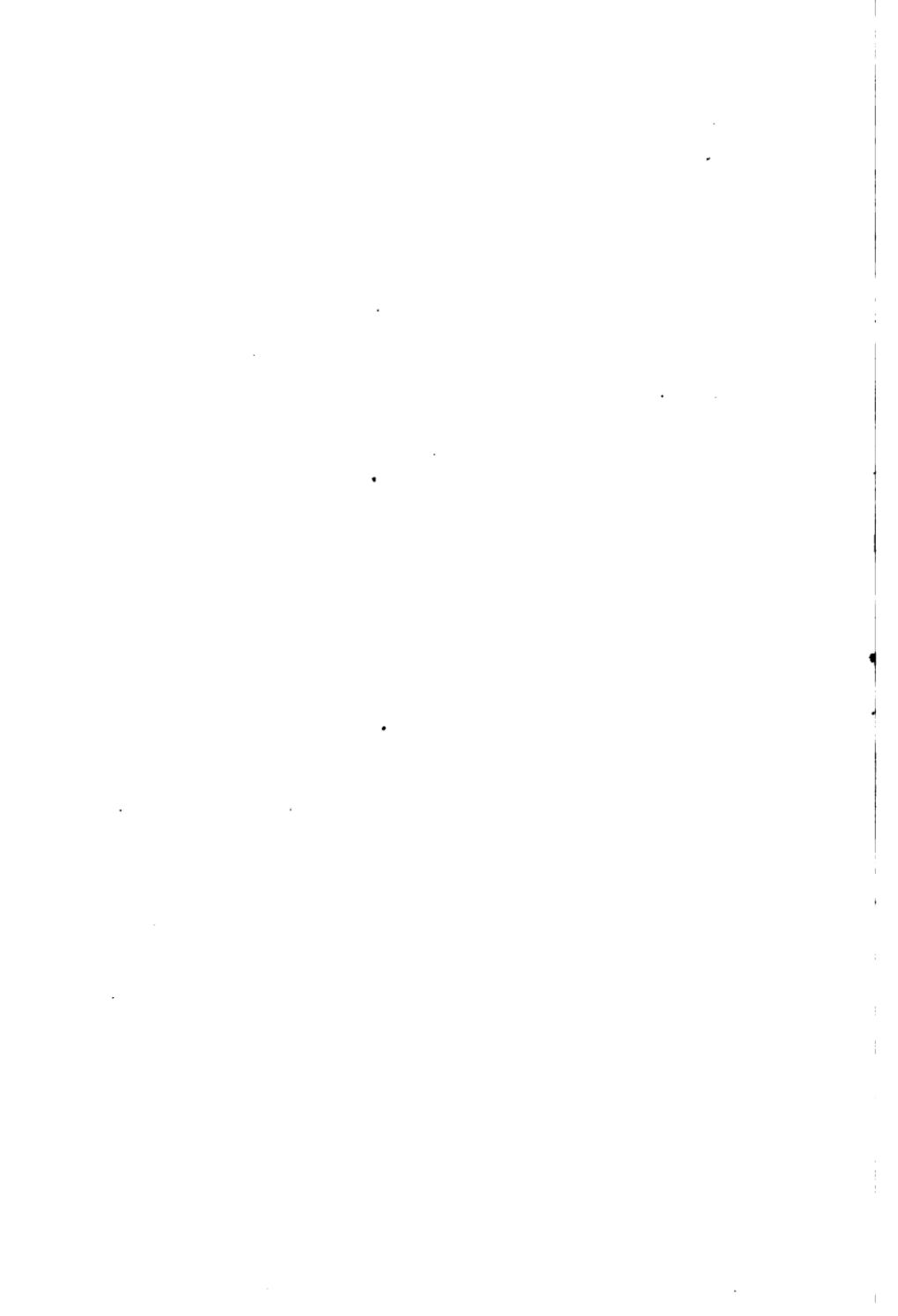


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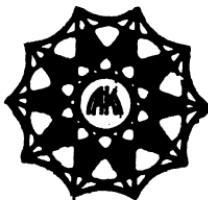






# OTHERS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE NEW VERSE



**"THE OLD EXPRESSIONS ARE WITH US ALWAYS,  
AND THERE ARE ALWAYS OTHERS."**

# OTHERS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE NEW VERSE  
(1917)

EDITED BY  
ALFRED KREYMBORG

LITERATURE OF  
CALIFORNIA



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The Poetry Journal  
The Poetry Review of America  
Rogue  
The Soil  
Blast

## ING

Ing? Is it possible to mean ing?

Suppose

for the termination in *g*

a disoriented  
series

of the simple fractures

in sleep.

Soporific

has accordingly a value for soap

so present to  
sew pieces.

And *p* says: Peace is.

And suppose the *i*

to be big in ing  
as Beginning.

Then Ing is to ing

as aloud

accompanied by times

and the meaning is a possibility

of ralsis.

## ARITHMETICAL PROGRESSION OF THE VERB "TO BE"

On a sheet of paper  
dropped with the intention of demolishing  
space  
by the simple subtraction of a necessary plane  
draw a line that leaves the present  
in addition  
carrying forward to the uncounted columns  
of the spatial ruin  
now considered as complete  
the remainder of the past.  
The act of disappearing  
which in the three-dimensional  
is the fate of the convergent  
vista  
is thus  
under the form of the immediate  
arrested in a perfect parallel  
of being  
in part.

**FOR "SHADY HILL," CAMBRIDGE, MASS.**

A drink into home use indicates early Italian. Otherwise

*"the element of how  
keeps insides. Nothing has now."*

But after the carpet whose usury can eat thirds?

Blunders are belted in cousins. Use what listens on Sunday, and catchy elms will oxidize pillows. Any need is original in absence.

The clothes are on the parlor. They are acted by buttons. To extract the meet, invert as if to the light, registering the first position at half. The passage is in time.

As at the end of an equation of two to green,

*which have the butters of extra broken  
on badges biting a needle to partners  
if only the bridge is fluent  
let it not nice.*

**INTERFERE IN ORDER TO MORrow was once  
upon a timePIECE OF MY MInd you do not**

**AXIOM**

From a determinable horizon  
absent  
spectacularly from a midnight  
which has yet to make public  
a midnight  
in the first place incompatibly copied  
the other  
in observance of the necessary end  
guarantees  
the simultaneous insularity  
of a structure  
self-contained  
a little longer  
than the general direction  
of goods opposed  
tangentially.

## THEOREM

For purposes of illusion

the actual ascent of two waves  
transparent to a basis  
which has a disappearance of its own

is timed

at the angle of incidence  
to the swing of a suspended  
lens

from which the waves wash

the protective coloration.

Through the resultant exposure

to a temporal process

an emotion

ideally distant  
assumes on the uneven surface  
descending  
as the identity to be demonstrated  
the three dimensions

with which it is incommensurate.

## DEATH

### I

A fan of smoke, in the long, green-white reverie of  
the horizon,  
Slowly curls apart.  
So shall I rise and widen out in the silence of air.

### II

An old man runs down a little yellow road  
To an out-flung, white thicket uncovered by morning.  
So shall I swing to the white sharpness of death.

## AFTER-PAIN

Hill flowers salute his feet  
As he parts them, climbing a slender path.  
They are flowers of breath-like pain  
Growing near the crest of every happiness he has.  
He stoops and runs his fingers over them,  
Then hurries to his white-pillared shelter of happiness,  
With a queer reverence.

### THE GHOST SWORD

With a burning tug,  
Came her name, almost buried again  
By the softly rushing noise of the room.  
The silk over my soul was pierced,  
And the filmy breast was cut  
By something like pointed breath —  
(Too utterly thin to be pain)  
The little ghost sword of her name.

### FRIENDSHIP

Grey, drooping-shouldered bushes scrape the edges  
Of bending swirls of yellow-white flowers.  
So do my thoughts meet the wind-scattered color of  
you.

The green-shadowed trance of the water  
Is splintered to little, white-tasseled awakenings  
By the beat of long black oars.  
So do your words cut the massed smoothness of  
thoughts of you.

Split, brown-blue clouds press into each other,  
Over hills dressed in mute, clinging haze.  
So do my thoughts slowly form over the draped  
mystery of you.

### THE KING

Seven full-paunched eunuchs came to me  
Bearing before them upon a silver shield  
The secrets of my enemy.

As they crossed my threshold to stand,  
With stately and hypocritical gesture  
In a row before me,  
One stumbled.  
The dull incurious eyes of the others  
Blazed into no laughter,  
Only a haggard malice  
At the discomfiture  
Of their companion.

Why should such THINGS have a power  
Not spoken for in the rules of men?

I would not receive them.  
Covering my head, I motioned them  
To go forth from my presence.

Where shall I find an enemy  
Worthy of me as him they defaced?

As they left me,  
Bearing with them  
Lewd shield and scarlet crown,  
One paused upon the threshold,  
Insolent,  
To sniff a flower.

Even him I permitted to go forth,  
Safely, into the sunlight.

• • • • •

Therefore, I have renounced my kingdom;  
In a little black boat I have set sail  
Out  
Upon the sea.

There is no land and the sea  
Is black like cypresses waiting at midnight  
In a place of tombs,  
Is black like the pool of ink  
In the palm of a sooth-sayer.

My boat  
Fears the white-lipped waves that snatch at it,  
Hungriily,  
Furtively,  
As they steal past like cats  
Into the night:  
Beneath me, in their hidden places,  
The great fishes talk of me  
In a tongue I have forgotten.

## THE COMING OF NIGHT

*(In the city)*

The sun is near set  
And the tall buildings  
Become teeth  
Tearing bloodily at the sky's throat;  
The blank wall by my window  
Becomes night sky over the marshes  
When there is no moon, and no wind,  
And little fishes splash in the pools.

I had lit my candle to make a song for you,  
But I have forgotten it for I am very tired;  
And the candle . . . a yellow moth . . .  
Flutters, flutters,  
Deep in my brain.  
My song was about, 'a foreign lady  
Who was beautiful and sad,  
Who was forsaken, and who died  
A thousand years ago.'  
But the cracked cup at my elbow,  
With dregs of tea in it,  
Fixes my tired thought more surely  
Than the song I made for you and forgot . . .  
That I might give you *this*.

I am tired.

I am so tired  
That my soul is a great plain  
Made desolate,  
And the beating of a million hearts  
Is but the whisper of night winds  
Blowing across it.

**FRAGMENT — from “The song of creation”**

*(Sung by God upon the evening of the eighth day for His own comfort.)*

I am all things,  
and in everything:  
**I AM YAHOVAH THE GREAT. . .**  
No thing is great as I am.

**I sing:**  
hear Me, O men!

From the blue sea,  
From the grey sea,  
From the sea that is green  
    and treacherous,  
Come the fishes  
    leaping in shoals.

I am the silver fishes,  
And I the spreader of nets.

**I am the furtive cat**  
    and the sparrow that he watches.

I am the yellow corn,  
And I am the reaper,  
And the grey steel of the scythe  
    singing before him.

**I dwell in joy,**  
    and in pain . . .

(Are not these the words men taught Me  
upon the noon tide  
of this day?)

**I is I who moan  
upon the white bed of lovers.**

(O for the white bed,  
and the two mouths that are one mouth!)

**I am the conception,  
and the birth;  
Mine the pain of coming forth  
from the wet wombs of the mothers.**

**Hear My song! hear Me!  
from My thighs you have sprung.**

. . . . .

(O red and white  
for the marriage bed of my lovers.)

**I am the murderer  
hanging upon the gibbet;  
And with his victim I died,  
dappled with blood and froth,  
and rolling up My eyes.**

**I am the arrow  
Striking down all of them:  
I am the striker,  
And I am the stricken.**

**I am all things,  
and in everything:  
I AM YAHOVAH THE GREAT . . .  
No thing is great as I am.**

## SONGS

## I

The buds  
Coming to color  
Make me weep.  
For my own brown cloak  
Has never broken.  
Spring, rend me!

## II

The hummings of the streets,  
Their whisperings,  
And the moon  
White above me —  
These, and the beating of my heart  
Make me glad —

## III

The moon  
Strikes her hand  
Across my face as I lie.  
And the pain of it  
Keeps me from sleeping.

## IV

Red as dawn  
The apple petals burn  
Against my burning cheek.

## V

Rainsound, sunset, and night,  
Clear skies, and the falling of water —

Who would seek love?

## VI

Your kiss  
Is on my face  
Like the first snow  
On bewildered grass —

## VII

Your hand and mine  
Hold converse together.  
We do not know what they are saying.

Although we listen,  
Eager eavesdroppers,  
We cannot understand  
What they are saying —

## VIII

That leaning tree was once a girl, and heard  
A man's heart next her own. Remembering  
She holds her arm across the moon for us —

**IX**

Of sticks and leaves  
We made an image of Love  
In play.  
And then the image came to life  
And seized us —

**X**

Clutching at immortality,  
We found each other's hands.

**XI**

Take your arms away  
That I may remember their pressure. —

**XII**

My hand is blind without you —

**XIII**

We two — we are young!  
We have lips to sing  
To sing and kiss.

We two, we are glad  
We have hearts that beat  
That beat — And break.

## XIV

Take this kiss and wear it,  
A shield that will ward off  
My words that might hurt you —

## XV

The sun is a fire in the sky  
And the thought of you  
Is a fire in my heart.

The gray sea  
Will quench the sun —

## XVI

As if life were a fruit  
And you  
The only tree on which it grew

## XVII

The moments  
Of our being tired of one another  
  
Are the whetstone  
Against which Life holds  
The knife of our loving.

## XVIII

Your arms can speak  
More readily than your voice  
Your shoulder touching mine tells breathless news.

**XIX****Birds**

And leaves falling in Autumn  
Have tried to teach me sadness  
But they have only taught me joy.  
Perhaps it is you  
Come to bring joy to me  
Who shall show me sadness at last?

**XX****THE CLOCK**

I hear our hearts together  
Like one clock  
Ticking our lives away.  
Could not some other  
Have reminded us of Death?  
Why must it be  
Our own hearts  
In the first hour  
That they have beat together?

**XXI****THE DAGGER**

Life is a dagger  
With no hilt.  
As you tighten your arms about me  
You only drive the two ends deeper  
Into your heart  
And mine.

## XXII

Now as we hear  
The little sobbing words  
Half yours, half mine —

## XXIII

I bend and touch the torches in your eyes  
Their flame lights all the little room called Life.

## XXIV

The wonder of your arm about me,  
Of your face close enough to touch,  
Of your soft breathing —

What can God show me  
When I am dead  
That can make me marvel?

### THE FRESHMAN

His tadpole mind wiggles  
in humorous waters  
growing legs and laughter.  
He aspires to solemnity.  
He would be a frog  
and sit  
with other large frogs  
upon a philosophic bench  
croaking.

### TO A NEW FRIEND

There is a silence round you  
and one round me  
distinct as the circles  
round birches and pines.  
What we have to say  
is no more than bird's twitter.  
But we will not be in haste  
It is thro the long comrade sharing  
of sky and earth  
that trees  
and silences  
come to understand each other.

## CRISS-CROSS

I am proud to be proud.  
I take without scruple all that you are.  
I fill your great hollow with my quiet fire.  
Your warmth will pierce evén thro the thick outer  
wall  
where the beggars lie in numb weariness.  
They will leap to their feet  
and tramp over the plains  
swearing a great oath  
to touch the spires of dawn.  
Gods will come . . . winged Gods will kneel to you.  
When you give  
they will think it is you.  
You will think it is you.  
But it will not be you.

## TO ARMADA LAMONT

Little silver, gold-fish child you  
swim bright in the bowl of my heart.  
I feed you  
broken bread of kisses —  
scraps of caress  
delicate  
as Japanese rice paper.  
You are always eager . . .  
always hungry. . . .

### SEA MOOD

My ecstasy has long blue fingers  
like the sea;  
moves to the rhythm of the tides  
upon your shores;  
carving stone strength and rugged silence  
into slow passionate curves  
of music.

### THE CONVENT

Nice to be God . . .  
My passions sit in long white rows  
within the little chapel  
sending incense up to me  
or fast singing in lonely cells  
or walk whispering together thro grey cloisters.  
Last night a wildcat novice broke her vows  
and now her sisters wear away the stone  
praying for her.  
They cannot guess who slipped the bolts  
Who rode with her  
Who gave her to her lover . . .  
Nice to be God . . .

### CHILDREN PLAYING

Watching I dive deep  
into blue waters of imagination  
where their life is  
opal tinted, iridescent.

They move together in on flashing rhythm  
weaving the pattern of a dance that once I knew  
to the still beat of their own music,  
making moon circles,  
long bright crescent curves,  
zig-zag lines of stars.  
I cannot take my eyes from them. . . .

A heavy voice dropped like a stone.  
They scatter.  
Not a blue gleam,  
not the impudent flicker of a tail!  
Sighing I emerge above sea.

### BEFORE MEETING

There will be no shock  
as of two strange sparks  
suddenly fused;  
no breathless pause  
as when friends meet  
after long absence.  
It will be very simple  
very easy.  
The truth is already set to music.  
There is only the singing.

### PORTRAIT

Her significance lies  
in an automatic conscience;  
in a mind picked up after every punctual meal  
in family virtues sewn on with a hand of steel  
and family sins ripped off regardless;  
in two accurate reproductions of herself  
energetically modelled;  
and in one small marionette  
who gives her his name  
and represents her at the polls.

### THE TEMPLE

The little Chinese God of Happiness  
sits  
upon the mantel-shelf  
cross-legged and calm.  
His eyes make long journeys over sea  
but he has time to nod to me  
now and then.  
With quiet hands I go on working.  
I am building him  
a temple.

### THE PROBLEM IS

The problem is —  
but I forget — there is no problem.  
I have only to put my sea  
into a bottle of thin green glass  
simple of form, as you suggest;  
and to enclose my sky  
in a carven case of pure ivory.  
The test will be  
when these stand upon your writing-table.  
Will my sea fill the room  
with its salt and its singing,  
with wine, with vigor and movement?  
Will my sky escape  
lean over and give  
her suns and moons  
and the lightning of her silence  
and manna of rest  
and musical sleep?

**STOLEN**

I crept slyly  
to your table  
. . . Oo . . . in  
Sugared peaches drowned in chianti . . .

Destiny  
shaped heavily like a nurse girl  
yanked me by the ear  
planked me in my high chair.  
“There,” said she,  
“Eat what is set before you,  
Impudence.”

Oh bread and butter  
flat every-dayness  
monotony  
milk.

### THE LITTLE TAILOR MEDITATES

. . . My idea would be to do away with the star-manufactured  
ready made garments  
they never fit  
like a suit cut to measure . . .  
then there's too much putting on and off  
too much running in and out  
like a dog at a fair  
in this business of birth and death . . .  
Fate handing you out your birth-clothes at one door  
and the Old Junk-man at the other  
ripping them off again.  
You're glad sometimes to be rid of the rags  
other-times  
it's hard to part with a beautiful thing . . .  
If a man could clothe himself now . . .  
evolve some kind of a one-piece garment  
out of eternal stuff  
that would be reversible  
like a silk and wool sweater  
suitable for any clime or star . . .  
the heaven-weave practical here  
the earth-warp fine enough  
to stand the wear and tear of THERE  
The Here and the There would be, you understand  
according to the Will of the Wearer.  
Such, begging the Lord's pardon  
Would be my humble suggestion.

## PRELUDES

## 1.

The winter evening settles down  
With smells of steaks in passage ways.  
Six o'clock.

The burnt-out ends of smoky days.  
And now a gusty shower wraps  
The grimy scraps  
Of withered leaves about our feet  
And newspapers from vacant lots;  
The showers beat  
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,  
And at the corner of the street  
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.  
And then the lighting of the lamps!

## 2.

The morning comes to consciousness  
Of faint stale smells of beer  
From the sawdust-trampled street  
With all its muddy feet that press  
To early coffee-stands.  
With the other masquerades  
That time resumes,  
One thinks of all the hands  
That are raising dingy shades  
In a thousand furnished rooms.

## 3.

You tossed a blanket from the bed,  
You lay upon your back, and waited;  
You dozed, and watched the night revealing  
The thousand sordid images  
Of which your soul was constituted;  
They flickered against the ceiling.  
And when the world came back  
And the light crept up between the shutters,  
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,  
You had such a vision of the street  
As the street hardly understands;  
Sitting along the bed's edge, where  
You curled the papers from your hair,  
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet  
In the palms of both soiled hands.

## 4.

His soul stretched tight across the skies  
That fade behind a city block,  
Or trampled by insistent feet  
At four and five and six o'clock;  
And short square fingers stuffing pipes  
And evening newspapers, and eyes  
Assured of certain certainties,  
The conscience of a blackened street  
Impatient to assume the world.  
I am moved by fancies that are curled  
Around these images, and cling:  
The notion of some infinitely gentle,  
Infinitely suffering thing.  
Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;  
The worlds revolve like ancient women  
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

## RHAPSODY OF A WINDY NIGHT

Twelve o'clock,  
Along the reaches of the street  
Held in a lunar synthesis,  
Whispering lunar incantations  
Dissolve the floors of memory  
And all its clear relations,  
Its divisions and precisions,  
Every street lamp that I pass  
Beats like a fatalistic drum,  
And through the spaces of the dark  
Midnight shakes the memory  
As a madman shakes a dead geranium.

Half past one,  
The street lamp sputtered,  
The street lamp muttered,  
The street lamp said: "Regard that woman  
"Who hesitates toward you in the light of the door  
"Which opens on her like a grin.  
"You see the border of her dress  
"Is torn and stained with sand,  
"And you see the corner of her eye  
"Twists like a crooked pin."

The memory throws up high and dry  
A crowd of twisted things;  
A twisted branch upon the beach  
Eaten smooth, and polished  
As if the world gave up  
The secret of its skeleton,  
Stiff and white.  
A broken spring in a factory yard

Rust that clings to the form that the strength has  
left

Hard and curled and ready to snap.

Half past two,

The street lamp said:

“Remark the cat which flattens itself in the gutter,

“Slips out its tongue

“And devours a morsel of rancid butter.”

So the hand of a child, automatic,

Slipped out and pocketed a toy that was running  
along the quai

I could see nothing behind the child’s eye.

I have seen eyes in the street

Trying to peer through lighted shutters,

And a crab one afternoon in a pool,

An old crab with barnacles on his back,

Gripped the end of a stick which I held him.

Half past three,

The lamp sputtered,

The lamp muttered in the dark.

The lamp hummed:

“Regard the moon,

“La lune ne grade aucune rancune,

“She winks a feeble eye,

“She smiles into corners.

“She smooths the hair of the grass.

“The moon has lost her memory.

“A washed-out smallpox cracks her face,

“Her hand twists a paper rose,

“That smells of dust and old cologne.

“She is alone

“With all the old nocturnal smells

“That cross and cross across her brain.

“The reminiscence comes

“Of sunless dry geraniums

"And dust in crevices,  
"Smells of chestnuts in the street,  
"And female smells in shuttered rooms,  
"And cigarettes in corridors  
"And cocktail smells in bars."

The lamp said:

"Four o'clock,  
"Here is the number on the door.  
"Memory!  
"You have the key,  
"The little lamp spreads a ring on the stair,  
"Mount.  
"The bed is open; the toothbrush hangs on the wall,  
"Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life.  
"The last twist of the knife."

## WORDS OUT OF WAKING

In the warm, fragrant darkness  
We lay,  
Side by side,  
Straight;  
And your voice  
That had been silent  
Came to me through the dark  
Asking *Do you smell the lilacs?*  
You, half in sleep,  
Speaking softly, —  
Indistinctly.  
Then it seemed to me,  
A sudden moment,  
As if we lay in our graves,  
And you were speaking across  
From your mound to mine;  
In the springtime,  
Speaking of lilacs, —  
With muffled voice through the grass.

## ART

At last we let each other go,  
And I left you:  
Left the demand and the desire of you,  
And all our windings in and out and bickerings of  
love;  
And I was wandering  
Through corridors and rooms of pictures,  
Waiting for my mind to sharpen again  
Out of its blur.

Now was stern air to breathe;  
High, rational; clear of you and me.  
The medals in their ordered cases,  
Round,  
Clean-edged,  
Cooled me.  
The tossing and tumbling of my body drew itself  
into form,  
Into poise,  
Looking at their fine symmetry of being.

## DAMASK

White flowers,  
Frail tracery,  
Born of whiteness  
In a white world,  
You are more shadowy  
Than frost flowers,  
More pale,  
Growing in your smooth atmosphere;  
Thinly,  
Without substance,  
Vivid for a moment,  
Then softly  
Dimmed again;  
White lost in white.

## ARCHES

Under the high-arching bridge  
The shadow arch  
Bends  
Curved,  
Down into the water  
And lies in the water as motionless  
As the arch above it is motionless:  
Masonry of the dusk.

### HEY NONINO

I will put on my gay dress,  
My corals and locket;  
On my hair a blue ribbon,  
And my softest shoes:  
I will go and dance  
Where the mirror will show me;  
I will go and dance  
And turn myself and courtesy  
(O the mirror will be glad!)  
And courtesy way way down.  
Spreading out my dress  
To watch how it looks,  
Spreading out my gay dress over the floor.

## DESIRE

Once you were always calling me,  
Calling me when I could not answer,  
Urging me where I could not follow —  
So that I wished I had been born without desire,  
As a stone.

But now many days you have left me.  
And in the silence I have learned your meaning.

For a part of me is gone when you are gone;  
I am less  
And the world is less.

O let me have my longing back again!  
Now gladly I will bear it;  
Gladly I will hold it to me,  
Though without release;  
Always.

For what would be the pride of the sun itself  
With its light gone?  
O kindle me again, desire.  
Return to me.  
Return.

### ESCAPE

O you, most gracious,  
With soft breasts  
And laughing kind eyes;  
You, of such deep gentleness,  
And wide-seeing, calm,  
Unlaboring wisdom —  
Whose body I love:  
Let me be your baby!  
Take me into your body,  
To carry me unborn;  
For I am tired of now being grown up  
And thinking, and knowing:  
I am tired of having always to will and make.  
Let me sink myself in you,  
In your love and steadfast quietness,  
And not be fretting or contending any more.  
Attainment allures me  
And taunts me,  
And I am weary of being urged.  
I would like to rest from this living:  
I would like to stop, and not be, for a long time:  
Until I have rested and rested from life!  
Take away what I have become  
And let me be again unborn —  
An unborn baby, and you carrying me!  
Merged in you;  
Not needing to live of myself:  
Having my life through your life:  
My peace in your serene;  
In your sufficing strength.

### RIDDLE

Physical,  
So that nothing is more of the flesh;  
Yet spiritual,  
So that nothing is so wholly spiritual.

Without dignity,  
Awkward, uncomely;  
Yet of majesty equal with death and birth  
And sacred with them.

Solemn,  
What is more gay?  
(With almost the gaiety of childhood)  
Simple and swift and brief,  
What in all the world is longer,  
More intricate of result?

Desired above all joys.  
And above all joys fled from;  
To each new man and woman seeming utterly new,  
Utterly their own  
As if never tasted before;  
Yet the property,  
Common as dust,  
Of all the millions of the world;  
Old as life.

### VITA NUOVA

I have entered into my inheritance;  
I am also one of the kingdom.  
Oh it is good to the heart,  
The pride of it swelleth the heart,  
The love of it reacheth forth the hands in greeting.  
Lo, I have part in the clouds  
And the stars are mine and the sunlight;  
The tall grass swept by the wind,  
The silence of trees is for me;  
The color and form of things,  
The rapture is sound:  
Thoughts that are born in my heart  
And urge their way to my tongue,  
Only the sweetest of them can never be gauged or  
uttered.

## EBB SAND AND STARS

### I

From that last touch of fingers  
The broken wire,  
The message suspended  
Over a desert of rain.

### II

Peace . . . go,  
And in strange places,  
Unexpected turns,  
You will find me.

### III

Unforgotten?  
Unremembered?  
Does the flower forget light  
Or remember growing?

### IV

Here,  
There will be sounds always  
Of music beginning . . .  
Born of that anguish.

### V

Better to bless  
Those steeps of yourself  
Those flowered valleys,  
With new grass.

## VI

Peace . . . go . . .  
Ah no . . . come closer.  
Yes . . . go,  
You cannot help come closer.

## VII

Ebb sand and stars,  
These be the healing mutes . . .  
Beaten down are the sounds of the sea,  
And I am alone.

## VIII

The tree will whisper,  
The window laugh,  
The room hold me . . .  
Trying to displace you.

## IX

Yes, the wheat and the tares,  
The able and pitiable things . . .  
The sky of my memory of you  
Floods them all.

## X

I would go deeper  
But I fear to tread the earth there,  
I fear that crust.  
There is all hell beneath it.

## XI

And the nights,  
They will be filled with lines,  
Lines that vainly try to express longing, . . .  
While the wind flaps a shutter.

## XII

*Printemps* . . .  
I told you the word,  
And you said it over and over,  
Not knowing it was gone.

## XIII

O temple bells!  
O far Japan of that verandah!  
Such grief will come sometimes  
From a spiral vine with flowers . . .

## XIV

In the afternoons  
I shall go quietly  
To hear Harrison Williams play.  
I shall sit on the green sofa, and not call you.

## XV

The sumach will follow you,  
The plum bloom and redbud,  
And the flowers of another summer . . .  
But I shall not feel goodby.

## XVI

These things that I say  
They will be as nothing  
They will be as dead grass  
They will be burnt up with flaine.

## NEW SONGS OF DELIVERANCE

## I

THE POPLARS Three poplars I have watched  
A long time now in the west wind  
Which blows here always.  
Three poplars close together that lean  
In the wind . . .  
And I have never seen them touch each  
other.

So, my brothers, my good brothers,  
With whom by the chance of Fortune  
I have lived,  
Let us lean to the stern fate  
All one way if you like . . .  
But let us not touch.

## II

ONE STRING O song, song . . .  
O untenable song,  
On one string of the harp  
I have heard you make the sweetest  
music!

## III

**EPITOME** What is but a small thing  
Will have the changelessness of marble,  
    too,  
The bent twig is a matter of direction  
    only . . .  
It seems to me  
When I have heard the first speech of a  
    child,  
I have seen the whole time  
Of a man on earth.  
There is interpretation  
In a song in the darkness,  
And a bird will have one feather erect  
    always  
Like a flag.

## IV

**THE DOG** Scored and bleeding was the ear of that  
    dog,  
Helpless and hideless his foot.  
And how he stood even more unmoved  
Thereafter!  
How he annoyed sleep  
More than ever with the perception of his  
    task;  
How he waited, half fallen  
By the door,  
And sounded joy-trumpets  
For the next coming of his enemy!

## V

THE           I am not smiling,  
LITTLE        Beside this mound —  
FLOWERS      For a long time now I have forgotten to  
                 smile  
                 At the wrecked and beaten ruin  
                 Of so many a proud-armed thought . . .  
                 But I watch the little flowers  
                 Growing from it, —  
                 Gravely I watch the little indomitable  
                 flowers  
                 Putting their heads up,  
                 Thrusting out their fingers to the sun.

## VI

CHRYsalis They have piled one thing after another  
                 upon me,  
                 Until I am buried;  
They have placed shadow upon shadow,  
                 And over the top with my own cowardly  
                 hands  
I have laid a roof.  
  
Perhaps it will be a long time before I  
                 grow  
To break from my house,  
                 And drop it about me as a boy bursts  
                 his coats . . .  
But that I will do in the end.  
  
What a falling of curious shadows there  
                 will be,  
Shadows that no one will linger with,  
                 Shadows of the past  
                 That none will cherish.

## VII

**PATHS** Many a one will go down those paths  
Where the wild ivy grows venomous,  
And the rope vines shake in the wind  
And the tall chestnuts make the light  
dim —  
Many a one who will never know  
That Greece and all her wars  
Could not outcry  
The crying memories of those branches,  
The troubled pity of those stolid trunks.

## VIII

**WAIFS** Dark hopes,  
Dim, stupid memories . . .  
But I loved them too,  
And it is another mystery  
Of this new shining morn of love,  
That she carries them about her  
Like little slaves of her gladness,  
Little shadows in her hair.

## IX

**RETURN** Come then, all my dreams,  
Come back, and be at home . . .  
See, like the flame between the logs,  
You will take life again,  
You will creep higher and higher!  
O wounded one,  
O you of bitter love,

O you who were too great and angular  
For courts,  
O you who could not ever speak  
So full was your desire . . .  
Come then undiminished, all my dreams,  
Come back and be at home!

## STONES

It is best now  
to give suffering its way with me,  
like a sea with a stone,  
and let the spray which is others' joy —  
the spray dancing on those  
I bumped against  
while bounding and tumbling and rolling here —  
give me content.

Suffering  
carves smoothness  
which cannot cut any longer —  
should I roll again.

## DOLCE

In the great clouds, there is rain.  
A swift rain.  
A rain that kills.

And a slow rain.  
A rain that comes like leaves.

I would be the slow rain.

In the hills, there is a god  
who rolls from side to side.

In the valley, a no-god  
who lifts his arm like a tree.

I would be this one.

In the streets, there are children.  
And there are old people.  
Very old people.

I would not be the children,  
but the old people,  
the very old people.

There is a woman.  
Big with gentle yielding.

I would be like her.

**LEAFLESS**

You are so straight and still.  
What does it mean?  
Are you concerned  
in the tops of you now  
with sky matters  
and winter butterflies?  
Do not the leaves you colored  
trouble you longer?  
Try and recall!

Try and recall:  
(over this path  
she used to tread her way,  
over there  
I used to throne them for her,  
green, brown, red, yellow!)

Did you look at me?  
Did you say something?

## DAWNS

I have gone  
from pride  
all the way up to humility  
this day-to-night.  
The hill  
was more terrible  
than ever before.

Near the top  
you may note a tall slim tree.  
It isn't bent; it doesn't lean.  
It is only looking back.

At dawn,  
under that tree,  
still another me of mine  
was buried.

Waiting for me to come again,  
humorously solicitous  
of what I bring next,  
it looks down.

## BERCEUSE ARIETTES

### I

We have a one-room home.  
You have a two-room, three-room, four-room.  
We have a one-room home  
because a one-room home is all we have.  
We have a one-room home  
because a one-room home holds all we have.  
We have a one-room home  
because we do not want  
a two-room, three-room, four-room.  
If we had a two-room, three-room, four-room  
we would need more than a one-room home.  
We have a one-room home.  
We like a one-room home.

### II

She likes to make shades,  
yellow shades for the window,  
but if you ask her why  
she likes to make shades,  
yellow shades for the window,  
she would not tell you why  
she likes to make shades,  
yellow shades for the window,  
except that she likes to.  
If you ask me why  
she likes to make shades,  
yellow shades for the window,  
I could tell you why,

but you might think me proud,  
so I will not tell you why  
she likes to make shades,  
yellow shades for the window.

### III

There are no pictures on our three walls.  
She does not like pictures on our three walls.  
She likes pictures.  
But she does not like pictures on our three walls.  
Our three walls are happy.

### IV

We have no dishes  
to eat our meals from.  
We have no dishes  
to eat our meals from  
because we have no dishes  
to eat our meals from.  
We have no dishes  
to eat our meals from  
because we can afford no  
dishes to eat our meals from.  
When we can afford  
dishes to eat our meals from  
(some day I'll sell an ariette!)  
we will have dishes  
to eat our meals from.  
We need no dishes  
to eat our meals from,  
we have fingers  
to eat our meals from,  
(but won't you buy this ariette?)

## V

She has two green pillows  
on our black couch.  
They should be cerulean bolsters  
on a lemon silk divan  
and you would not  
challenge me that  
she has two green pillows  
on our black couch,  
and I would not  
challenge you that  
yours has cerulean bolsters  
on your lemon silk divan.  
Have cerulean bolsters  
on your lemon silk divan  
and let us have  
two green pillows  
on our black couch.

## VI

We have many many children  
I would sing you of  
but you would not call  
them any any children.  
And what is it to you how  
many many children we have,  
so why should I sing you of  
any any children we have?

## VII

I-re-mi-fa-sol-fa-mi-  
love-her-mi-fa-sol-la-sol-fa-  
and-she-sol-la-ci-do-ci-la-

loves-ci-do-ci-la-sol-la-fa-mi-

loves-me-re-mi-re-do.

And we-re-mi-fa-sol-fa-mi-  
love-us-re-mi-fa-mi-we-do.

### VIII

Our window is stained  
with the figures she has blown on it.

Our window is stained  
with the figures she has blown on it  
with her breath.

Our window is stained  
with the figures she has blown on it  
with her breath  
on which a spirit has blown —

A spirit? a saint? a sprite?  
who was it  
blew figures on her breath  
that our window is stained  
with the figures she has blown on it?

### IX

*This room  
was our cradle.  
It will rock  
in our memory  
no matter what  
we grow to.*

### AT THE DOOR OF THE HOUSE

A thousand women's eyes  
Riveted to the unrealisable  
Scatter the wash-stand of the card-teller  
Defiled marble of Carrara  
On which she spreads  
Color-picture maps of destiny  
In the corner  
Of an inconducive bed-room

"Impassioned  
Doubly impassioned  
Sad  
You see these three cards  
But here is the double Victory  
And there is an elderly lady  
Ill in whom you are concerned  
This is the Devil  
And these two skeletons  
Are mortifications  
You are going to make a journey

At evening about love  
Here is the Man of the Heart  
Turning his shoulders to a lady  
Covered with tears about matrimony

At the door of your house  
There is a letter about an affair  
And a bed and a table

And this ace of spades turned upside-down  
‘With respect’  
Means that some man  
Has well you know  
Intentions little honorable

Here you are covered with tears  
For a deception  
The Man of the Heart  
Is in thoughtfulness for a letter  
He will make a journey at evening  
And really lady  
I should say  
It will not be long before you see him  
For there he is at the door of the house

And look  
Here are you  
And here is he  
In life and thought  
At the door of the house”

Muddled among the analine brightness of the Taurō  
cards

The wheels with wings  
The rows on rows of goblets  
Passionate magenta blossoms  
Hermits — bring luck —  
Moons Prison-fortresses  
Cudgels  
A man cut in half  
Means a deception  
And the nude woman  
Stands for the world

Those eyes

Of Petronilla Lucia Letizia  
    Felicita  
Filomena Amalia  
Orsola Geltrude Caterina Delfina  
Zita Bibiana     Tarsilla  
Eufemia,  
Looking for the little love-tale  
That never came true  
At the door of the house

THE EFFECTUAL MARRIAGE  
or  
THE INSIPID NARRATIVE  
OF  
GINA AND MIOVANNI

The door was an absurd thing  
Yet it was passable  
They quotidienu passed through it  
It was this shape

Gian and Miovanni    who they were God knows  
They knew    it was important to them  
This being of who they were  
They were themselves  
Corporeally    transcendently    consecutively  
conjunctively    and they were quite    complete

• • • • •

In the evening they looked out of their two windows  
Miovanni out of his library window  
Gina from the kitchen window  
From among his pots and pans  
Where he so kindly kept her  
Where she so wisely busied herself  
Pots and Pans she cooked in them  
All sorts of sialagogues  
Some say that happy women are immaterial

So here we might dispense with her  
Gina being a female  
But she was more than that  
Being an incipience a correllative  
an instigation of the reaction of man  
From the palpable to the transcendent  
Mollescent irritant of his fantasy  
Gina had her use Being useful  
contentedly conscious  
She flowered in Empyrean  
From which no well-mated woman ever returns

Sundays a warm light in the parlor  
From the gritty road on the white wall  
anybody could see it  
Shimmered a composite effigy  
Madonna crinolined a man  
hidden beneath her hoop  
Ho for the blue and red of her  
The silent eyelids of her  
The shiny smile of her

Ding dong said the bell  
Miovanni Gina called  
Would it be fitting for you to tell

the time for supper  
Pooh said Miovanni I am  
Outside time and space

Patience said Gina is an attribute  
And she learned at any hour to offer  
The dish appropriately delectable

What had Miovanni made of his ego  
In his library  
What had Gina wondered among the pots and  
pans  
One never asked the other  
So they the wise ones eat their suppers in peace

Of what their peace consisted  
We cannot say  
Only that he was magnificently man  
She insignificantly a woman who understood  
Understanding what is that  
To Each his entity to others  
their idiosyncracies to the free expansion  
to the annexed their liberty  
To man his work  
To woman her love  
Succulent meals and an occasional caress  
So be it  
It so seldom is

While Miovanni thought alone in the dark  
Gina supposed that peeping she might see  
A round light shining where his mind was  
She never opened the door  
Fearing that this might blind her  
Or even

That she should see Nothing at all  
So while he thought  
She hung out of the window  
Watching for falling stars  
And when a star fell  
She wished that still  
Miovanni would love her to-morrow  
And as Miovanni  
Never gave any heed to the matter  
He did

Gina was a woman  
Who wanted everything  
To be everything in woman  
Everything everyway at once  
Diurnally varigate  
Miovanni always knew her  
She was Gina  
Gina who lent monogamy  
With her fluctuant aspirations  
A changeant consistency  
Unexpected intangibilities

Miovanni remained  
Monumentally the same  
The same Miovanni  
If he had become anything else  
Gina's world would have been at an end  
Gina with no axis to revolve on  
Must have dwindled to a full stop

In the mornings she dropped  
Cool crystals  
Through devotional fingers  
Saccharine for his cup

And marketed  
With a Basket  
Trimmed with a red flannel flower  
When she was lazy  
She wrote a poem on the milk bill  
The first strophe      Good morning  
The second      Good night  
Something not too difficult to  
Learn by heart

The scrubbed smell of the white-wood table  
Greasy cleanliness      of the chopper board  
The coloured vegetables  
Intuited quality of flour  
Crickly sparks of straw-fanned charcoal  
Ranged themselves among her audacious happinesses  
Pet simplicities of her Universe  
Where circles were only round  
                        Having no vices.

(This narrative halted when I learned that the house which inspired it was the home of a mad woman.

— Forte dei Marmi)

## HUMAN CYLINDERS

### I

The human cylinders  
Revolving in the enervating dusk  
That wraps each closer in the mystery  
Of singularity  
Among the litter of a sunless afternoon  
Having eaten without tasting  
Talked without communion  
And at least two of us  
Loved a very little  
Without seeking  
To know if our two miseries  
In the lucid rush-together of automatons  
Could form one opulent well-being

Simplifications of men  
In the enervating dusk  
Your indistinctness  
Serves me the core of the kernel of you  
When in the frenzied reaching-out of intellect to  
intellect  
Leaning brow to brow communicative  
Over the abyss of the potential  
Concordance of respiration  
Shames  
Absence of corresponding between the verbal sensory  
And reciprocity  
Of conception  
And expression

Where each extrudes beyond the tangible  
One thin pale trail of speculation  
From among us we have sent out  
Into the enervating dusk  
One little whining beast  
Whose longing  
Is to slink back to antedeluvian burrow  
And one elastic tentacle of intuition  
To quiver among the stars

The impartiality of the absolute  
Routs the polemic  
Or which of us  
Would not  
Receiving the holy-ghost  
Catch it and caging  
Lose it  
Or in the problematic  
Destroy the Universe  
With a solution.

## CRITICS AND CONNOISSEURS

There is a great amount of poetry in unconscious  
Fastidiousness. Certain Ming  
Products, imperial floor coverings of coach  
Wheel yellow, are well enough in their way but I  
have seen something  
That I like better — a  
Mere childish attempt to make an imper-  
fectly ballasted animal stand up,  
A determinate ditto to make a pup  
Eat his meat on the plate.

I remember a black swan on the Cherwell in Oxford  
With flamingo colored, maple-  
Leaflike feet. It stood out to sea like a battle-  
ship. Disbelief and conscious fastidiousness were  
the staple  
Ingredients in its  
Disinclination to move. Finally its hardi-  
hood was not proof against its  
Inclination to detain and appraise such bits  
Of food as the stream

Bore counter to it; it made away with what I gave it  
To eat. I have seen this swan and  
I have seen you; I have seen ambition without  
Understanding in a variety of forms. Happening  
to stand  
By an ant hill, I have

Seen a fastidious ant carrying a stick,  
north, south, east, west, till it turned  
on  
Itself, struck out from the flower-bed into  
the lawn,  
And returned to the point

From which it started. Then abandoning the  
stick as  
Useless and overtaxing his  
Jaws with a particle of whitewash, pill-like but  
Heavy, he again went through the same course of  
procedure. What is  
There in being able  
To say that one had dominated the stream  
in an attitude of self-defense,  
In proving that one has had the experience  
Of carrying a stick?

### THE PAST IS THE PRESENT

Revived bitterness  
is unnecessary unless  
One is ignorant.

To-morrow will be  
Yesterday unless you say the  
Days of the week back-

Ward. Last weeks' circus  
Overflow frames an old grudge. Thus:  
When you attempt to

Force the doors and come  
At the cause of the shouts, you thumb  
A brass nailed echo.

### PEDANTIC LITERALIST

Prince Rupert's drop, paper muslin ghost,  
White torch "with power to say unkind  
Things with kindness and the most  
Irritating things in the midst of love and  
Tears," you invite destruction.

You are like the meditative man  
With the perfunctory heart; its  
Carved cordiality ran  
To and fro at first, like an inlaid and royal  
Immutable production;

Then afterward "neglected to be  
Painful" and "deluded him with  
Loitering formality,  
Doing its duty as if it did it not,"  
Presenting an obstruction

To the motive that it served. What stood  
Erect in you, has withered. A  
Little "palmtree of turned wood"  
Informs your once spontaneous core in its  
Immutable reduction.

“HE WROTE THE HISTORY BOOK,”  
IT SAID

There! You shed a ray  
Of whimsicality on a mask of profundity so  
Terrific that I have been dumbfounded by  
It oftener than I care to say.  
*The book?* Titles are chaff.

Authentically  
Brief and full of energy, you contribute to your  
father's  
Legibility and are sufficiently  
Synthetic. Thank you for showing me  
Your father's autograph.

LIKE A BULRUSH

Or the spike  
Of a channel marker or the  
Moon, he superintended the demolition of his  
image in  
The water by the wind. He did not strike

Them at the  
Time as being different from  
Any other inhabitant of the water. It was as if he  
Were a seal in the combined livery

Of bird plus  
Snake. It was as if he knew that  
The penguins were not fish and as if in their bat  
blindness, they did not  
Realize that he was amphibious.

### FRENCH PEACOCK

In "taking charge of your possessions when you saw them," you became a golden jay.

Whatever you admired you charmed away—  
The color, habit, ornament or attitude.

Of chiseled setting and black-opalescent dye,  
You were the jewelry of sense.

Ridiculous at times — you trod the pace  
Of liberty in market place  
And court; Molière,  
The huggermugger repertory of your first  
adventure is your own affair.

"Anchorites do not dwell in theatres"; and peacocks  
do not flourish in a cell.

Why make distinctions? The results were well  
When you were on the boards; nor were your  
triumphs bought

At horrifying sacrifice of stringency.

Despising sham, you used your sword

To riddle the conventions of excess;

Nor did the king love you the less

Nor did the world

In whose chief interest and for whose spontaneous delight, your broad tail was unfurled.

### SOJOURN IN THE WHALE

Trying to open locked doors with a sword, threading  
The points of needles, planting shade trees  
Upside down; swallowed by the opaqueness of one  
    whom the seas  
Love better than they love you, Ireland —

You have lived and lived on every kind of shortage.  
You have been compelled by hags to spin  
Gold thread from straw and have heard men say:  
    "There is a feminine  
Temperament in direct contrast to

Ours which makes her do these things. Circum-  
    scribed by a  
Heritage of blindness and native  
Incompetence, she will become wise and will be  
    forced to give  
In. Compelled by experience, she

Will turn back; water seeks its own level": and you  
Have smiled. "Water in motion is far  
From level." You have seen it when obstacles  
    happened to bar  
The path — rise automatically.

IN THIS AGE OF HARD TRYING  
NONCHALANCE IS GOOD, AND—

“Really, it is not the  
Business of the gods to bake clay pots.” They  
did not

Do it in this instance, A few  
Revolved upon the axes of their worth,  
As if excessive popularity might be a pot.

They did not venture the  
Profession of humility. The polished wedge  
That might have split the firmament  
Was dumb. At last it threw itself away  
And falling down, conferred on some poor fool a  
privilege.

“Taller by the length of  
A conversation of five hundred years than all  
The others,” there was one, whose tales  
Of what could never have been actual —  
Were better than the haggish, uncompanionable  
drawl

Of certitude; his by-  
Play was “more terrible in its effectiveness  
Than the fiercest frontal attack.”  
The staff, the bag, the feigned inconsequence  
Of manner, best bespeak that weapon — self pro-  
tectiveness.

### TO BE LIKED BY YOU WOULD BE A CALAMITY

"Attack is more piquant than concord," but when  
You tell me frankly that you would like to feel  
    My flesh beneath your feet,  
I'm all abroad. I can but put my weapon up  
    and bow you out.  
Gesticulation — it is half the language;  
Let unsheathed gesticulation be the steel  
    Your courtesy must meet,  
Since in your hearing words are mute, which  
    to my senses are a shout.

### ROSES ONLY

You do not seem to realize that beauty is a liability  
    rather than  
An asset — that in view of the fact that spirit  
    creates form — we are justified in supposing  
That you must have brains. For you, a symbol  
    of the unit, stiff and sharp,  
Conscious of surpassing — by dint of native superi-  
    ority and liking for everything  
Self dependent — anything an

Ambitious civilization might produce: for you, un-  
    aided to attempt through sheer  
Reserve, to confute presumptions resulting from  
    observation, is idle. You cannot make us  
Think you a delightful happen-so. But rose, if  
    you are brilliant; it

Is not because your petals are the without-which-nothing of pre-eminence. You would look — minus

Thorns — like a what-is-this, a mere

Peculiarity. They are not proof against a worm, the elements, or mildew

But what about the predatory hand? What is brilliance without co-ordination? Guarding the Infinitesimal pieces of your mind, compelling audience to

The remark that is better to be forgotten than to be remembered too violently,

Your thorns are the best part of you.

### TO A STEAM ROLLER

The illustration

Is nothing to you without the application.

You lack half wit. You crush all the particles down

Into close conformity and then walk back and forth on them.

Sparkling chips of rock

Are crushed down to the level of the parent block.

Were not "impersonal judgment in aesthetic Matters, a metaphysical impossibility," you

Might fairly achieve

It. As for butterflies, I can hardly conceive

Of one's attending upon you, but to question

The congruence of the complement is vain, if it exists.

## TO THE SOUL OF "PROGRESS"

You've made your mind  
A millstone to grind  
Chaff.  
You polish it  
And with your warped wit  
Laugh

At your torso,  
Prostrate where the crow  
Falls  
On such kind hearts  
As its god imparts —  
Calls

Claps its wings  
Till the tumult brings  
More  
Black minute men  
To revive again,  
War

At little cost.  
They cry for the lost  
Head  
And seek their prize  
Till the evening sky's  
Red.

## MY APISH COUSINS

Winked too much and were afraid of snakes. The  
zebras, supreme in  
Their abnormality; the elephants with their fog-  
colored skin  
And strictly practical appendages  
Were there, the small cats and the parakeet,  
Trivial and humdrum on examination, destroy-  
ing  
Bark and portions of the food it could not eat.

I recall their magnificence, now not more magnificent  
Than it is dim. It is difficult to recall the ornament,  
Speech, and precise manner of what one might  
Call the minor acquaintances twenty  
Years back; but I shall not forget him —  
that Gilgamesh among  
The hairy carnivora — that cat with the

Wedge shaped, slate grey marks on its forelegs and  
the resolute tail,  
Remarking astringently: "They have imposed on us  
with their pale,  
Half fledged protestations, trembling about  
In inarticulate frenzy, saying:  
It is not for all of us to understand art —  
finding it  
All so difficult, examining the thing

As if it were something inconceivably arcanic, as  
Symmetrically frigid as something carved out of  
    chrysoprase  
Or marble — strict with tension, malignant  
    In its power over us and deeper  
        Than the sea when it proffers flattery in ex-  
            change for hemp,  
    Rye, flax, horses, platinum, timber and fur."

### SAID ONE LITTLE ROSE-BUG

“My existence is burdened  
With the thought of the life,  
Such a drab and deadening life,  
My brother leads  
In that decayed tree,”  
Said one little rose-bug  
Speaking from the heart of the rose.

### THE ANCIENT BURDEN

We have moved our shop from  
The Ghetto,—  
Our children must forget  
The Ghetto!  
Could we but straighten our backs  
We might forget  
The Ghetto!

### A MODERN ORCHARD

Oh! the tragedy  
Of pruning souls  
To a common height  
That the fruit  
May be reached  
Without straining.

### A PEACE PANTOMIME

Aureoled by a rainbow  
The wail has gone  
From the fire-swept pines;  
Their feet fast in the soil  
Their charred arms beseechingly  
Stretched to the sky.  
It seemed the ache of a wish  
Expressed in voiceless violence.

### STARVATION PEAK EVENING

Towering it stood,  
Alone;  
Pinnacled in white  
Its great naked torso  
Purple against a turquoise sky  
Unpitied in its greatness.

### THE OAK

Gaunt,  
Stripped of leaves,  
Death-defiant  
In this thought:  
There is nothing more to lose.

### BROODING PINES

“Brooding pines  
Why do you wail?  
Is it that you are doomed  
To live  
When death  
Takes all  
About you?”

### INHERITANCE

Ancient trees  
Complacently usurping  
The sunshine;  
With forelooking tenderness  
Whispering to the saplings  
In their palsied shadows:  
“There is safety  
In our shadow,  
But you will wither  
In our shadow.”

### CLOUD SHADOWS

O River  
Running to greet the sea,  
What are cloud-shadows?  
Are they sadness  
Or vagrant joy  
Of the sunlight?

### WANDERERS

When we have a day to be idle  
Let us not go  
As kites that rise  
On opposing winds,  
Only so far as a string  
Will let them.  
But let us go out  
Like errant kites  
Where we can dream  
Beyond the measure of things.

### POPLARS IN SPRING

Joyous spires  
Of lyric spirit,  
Every branch  
A thirsting impulse.

### SEA WISDOM

My thoughts are carried to sea  
Unborn by the beach-fire's quivering air.

With the salt sea wind  
They return  
And put out my fire,  
And its quivering.

## INFINITY

In dreams  
I have been swept through space  
On a star-hung swing,  
Like a silkworm  
On a slender strand  
In a gale.

## THE EXPLORER

"Will you go home with me  
By the light of my lantern?  
The night is dark  
And the way is rough."

"I do not fear the ruts  
Of the traveled road  
And your lantern blinds my sight,  
When I would see  
The darkness clearer."

## VERNAL SHOWERS

At the rude goodness  
Of the rain  
The flowers wince,  
But drink.

## THE RIVER

When you would drive turmoil out,  
And let wonder in,  
Follow the clearing  
To the river;  
Drink of the quiet  
Of the river,  
Till your soul is timed  
To the river  
Flowing unfettered  
By moon and winds,  
Broadening to the sea  
With never a fear  
Of the sea being full.

## A NAVAJO POET

His bronze face aglow  
With the light of a wish;  
His whittled arrows,  
Sun-vow arrows  
Lean and clean,  
For a journey  
To the sun . . .

The shavings  
He left  
For whistling winds  
To play with.

### CHILD EYES

The bits of us,  
Peering out  
From child eyes:  
What more is immortality?

### OUR SON JACK

Our son Jack  
Wild with life,  
Went through  
When law and nature  
Said, "Go around."

Thus he died.

### IN A GARDEN

There was a paved alley there,  
apple trees and a lush lawn —  
and over the grey wall where the plums were  
stood the red brick of the chapel.  
While over the long white wall  
where the green apples grew  
and the rusted pears  
hung the grey tower of the church;  
so high, you couldn't see the top  
from that narrow garden.

In that narrow garden  
on that lush lawn,  
we found a ball left from some croquet game.  
It had a blue stripe girdling it  
and "ah" — I thought,  
"it is your soul about me  
and we are flung  
between our separate desires."

In that narrow garden  
on the lush lawn,  
we flung this ball each to the other.

My eyes were only for your legs, your arms,  
under that hot sun,  
the hard ball hurt my hands  
made them hot and prickly,  
and I'd have stopped,

but feared losing you —  
while you too stayed on playing,  
“ ah if I’d but known  
because you would not have me go.”

We played so long,  
I’d ceased to think.  
All thought, each sense,  
rapt in the shimmering circumference,  
the blue stripes girding it  
shone in the sky.

Then I seemed looking down  
from some far field  
with this ball one of worlds  
scorned  
and cast from each to the other,  
blue water girdling them.

By and by the tea-bell rang.

#### SPRING SUICIDE

Is it because they cannot bear the strain  
of green sap mounting body and brain  
that suddenly the warm hearts snap  
that late beat safe in the town trap,  
or where the mouldering edge of the rise  
was the whole world to their mad eyes?  
But yet the noisy street was cold  
and cold the wide hillside.

All the hot summer they wander lost.  
They know not why they weep in desolate places  
in green brakes wonder at white faces,  
and in far glades play with lost nereids.  
Soft eyes of deer the fairer are to them than any  
maid's  
and on the wide hillside and on the heath  
they lie beneath the rutting bear  
and eyes, stars, eyes, stars, threaten them.

Autumn for them is rotting leaves,  
good smells, and quiet while night weaves  
cold dismal mists that twirl and twist  
into the ash-boles — sad tryst  
the moon keeps with the white lake.  
And if the trees quiver and shake  
they do not fear them, lying there  
with the wind whispering in their hair.  
They do not fear the stars  
or weep under the moon  
though their heads go bound in iron bars  
and an old tune  
sings in each bleak brain.  
Silently they merge into the shadows under the trees  
head hanging on bent knees.

Still, there's a peace they get  
when snow is on the ground  
and the thudding heart beats cease  
and blood flows cool again its usual round,  
and once again they enter the old life,  
friends, children, wife,  
nor ever fear the white faces they see never  
and knowing yet of feet that come and go

soundless on the snow,  
do not tremble, though fierce eyes  
watch with sighs,  
fear nothing, for the snow folds them  
in a white shroud, body and soul.

The spring comes and the sap wings  
into body, into brain.  
They do not know why such great pain  
should take poor mortals with strong strings  
and jerk poor limbs to each queer whim.  
When the sun comes they follow him  
over hill, over plain  
till the moon drag them on again.  
Wandering largely, here, there,  
dreaming of winds, green eyes, red hair.  
Till suddenly the moon is full  
the sap leaps — one swift pull  
loosens the carking body  
that could not tranquil hold the strain  
of running sap in body and brain.

Now they're dead.  
Moonbeams chill each warm close bed  
but cannot move poor anguished dust  
call how she may, Must, must must!  
And then no more to trace the swallow  
or see the weak winds bend to and fro  
the slim ash branches pencilled thin  
on skies the night birds wander in,  
or follow the sun or follow the moon  
to an old tune  
or kiss deer's noses . . .

## WATCHING FOR FAIRIES

Not a fairy in sight,  
Not the tinkle of a fairy bell;  
Only a hillside singing with the light of May,  
Yet it is well with us who watch, yes, very well.

*There may be fairies crowding on our eyes,  
Teasing us to look,  
And they may be as blind to us.*

The prow of a blue-white cloud sallies from the hill-top,  
Skimming the upland pastures of the sky  
For prizes of fairy strife —  
A star run down a blind sky-alley,  
A panting, pleading moon.  
Who would choose to anchor on this sun-locked bank  
But us of human ill, cripples without a wing?  
Let us wave our hands to the cloud-ship,  
And turn to kissing.

Fairies, good-by!  
(Let us kiss each other)  
Now the fairy ship has vanished into mist.  
(Let us have love of one another)  
Let us pretend we are watching for fairies;  
Perhaps they will hide between our lips,  
Not to be left out.

You must not mind fairies,  
If we doubt you are —

*Dear me, how sharp that twig,  
It was not there before!*

See, fairies, we lay three berries,  
Red, bellied flasks of syrup of the sun,  
Upon a forked oak leaf;  
And over them another  
Leaf to keep the offering hid:  
Thus beneath this tree,  
And with the mossy, massive root for altar,  
We vow constancy to you Invisibles.

*And now the earth, the root,  
The crusty bark,  
Fit comfortably like an old boot.*

You see, fairies,  
It is not that we doubt, so much,  
As wonder what you are like:  
Like Barby here, perhaps,  
(Thus do I blunder with "like" to "like",  
Groping with blunt fingered wits)  
Wee bits of Barbies,  
Filamental folk whose halls are veins of violets.

Take care, O heedless Child!  
Too late, your elbow  
Hugely careering on elephantine bent,  
Has crushed the fruit and wasted is our spell,  
Blent with the wine within, upon the moss.  
Were you a fairy, really, you would but break one  
cell,  
And drink to ecstasy its ripe content.  
O, Barby!

But you are beautiful, you say I say,  
That's your reply?  
Well, what of that?  
You'll wear your beauty out  
As you will the pretty yellow hat  
With its useless pretty ribbon.  
That's just what I lament,  
The profusion of useless pretty things,  
As choking thick as dust;  
Crusted with rust of rainbows thrown aside;  
Thrust into chinks of space  
In sheer lust of being once, and dying,  
Over and over;  
One flying curve of lace-like foam,  
Breaking with the boom upon the land,  
And then another, to no end;  
A smother of fairy faces, modes and moons,  
And empty shells,  
And leaves and petals falling,  
Littering the earth, clogging the feet of duty,  
With beauty, just beauty.

This body makes my soul ache.  
Where is my valet, Death,  
To take from me the shoes that pinch,  
The clothes that are too tight?  
Somewhere he loiters, sleeps, perhaps.  
Then will I spend them, day and night,  
Unflinchingly in utter uselessness:  
I will look up to the blue shell of the sky,  
A baby robin shut in an egg;  
I will look up to the bent boughs,  
Like a man in a house,  
Staring at the beams, painted green;

And smile foolishly, and think:  
If this should be where the fairies live, I beg  
For a house like theirs,  
For airs so sweet to freight your thoughts to me,

And mine to you.  
And lo! I have it, magically new,  
The fairies' empty house, no lock, no door.  
Let us be useless,  
Let us kiss,  
And live here always, under this tree —  
A fairy house, a shade, a fire,  
And a tent to our imaginings.  
There is no Hell but unbelief.

*Curled in a bead of dew,  
Their frail petals folded over them,  
The fairies tilt to themselves  
And mock us.  
Did you ever wonder why dew trembles of itself  
Did you ever try to peer within,  
And wonder what you saw?  
I have.*

Not a fairy in sight,  
Not the tinkle of a fairy bell;  
Only a hillside singing with the light of May,  
Yet it is well with us who watch, yes, very well.

## MY PEOPLE

*My people are gray,  
pigeon gray, dawn gray, storm gray.  
I call them beautiful,  
and I wonder where they are going.*

## LOAM

In the loam we sleep,  
In the cool moist loam,  
To the lull of years that pass  
And the break of stars,

From the loam, then,  
The soft warm loam,  
We rise:  
To shape of rose leaf,  
Of face and shoulder.

We stand, then,  
To a whiff of life,  
Lifted to the silver of the sun  
Over and out of the loam  
A day.

## CHICAGO POET

I saluted a nobody.  
I saw him in a looking-glass.  
He smiled — so did I.  
He crumpled the skin on his forehead,  
    frowning — so did I.  
Everything I did he did.  
I said, "Hello, I know you."  
And I was a liar to say so.

Ah, this looking-glass man!  
Liar, fool, dreamer, play-actor,  
Soldier, dusty drinker of dust —  
Ah! he will go with me  
Down the dark stairway  
When nobody else is looking,  
When everybody else is gone.

He locks his elbow in mine.  
I lose all — but not him.

## STREET WINDOW

The pawn-shop man knows hunger,  
And how far hunger has eaten the heart  
Of one who comes with an old keepsake.  
Here are wedding rings and baby bracelets,  
Scarf pins and shoe buckles, jeweled garters,  
Old fashioned knives with inlaid handles,  
Watches of old gold and silver,  
Old coins worn with finger-marks.  
They tell stories.

## OTHERS

*(Fantasia for Muskmelon Days)*

Ivory domes . . white wings beating  
in empty space . .  
Nothing doing . . nuts . . bugs . . a regu-  
lar absolute humpty-dumpty busi-  
ness . . pos-i-tive-ly . . falling off  
walls and no use to call doctor,  
lawyer, priest . . no use, boy, no use.

O Pal of Mine, O Humpty Dumpty,  
shake hands with me.

O Ivory Domes, I am one of You:  
Let me in.  
For God's sake — let me in.

### THE WORMS AT HEAVEN'S GATE

Out of the tomb, we bring Badroulbadour,  
Within our bellies, we her chariot,  
Here is an eye. And here are, one by one,  
The lashes of that eye and its white lid.  
Here is the cheek on which that lid declined,  
And, finger after finger, here, the hand,  
The genius of that cheek. Here are the lips,  
The bundle of the body and the feet.

Out of the tomb we bring Badroulbadour.

### VALLEY-CANDLE

My candle burned alone in an immense valley.  
Beams of the huge night converged upon it,  
Until the wind blew.  
Then beams of the huge night  
Converged upon its image,  
Until the wind blew.

### GRAY ROOM

Although you sit in a room that is gray,  
Except for the silver  
Of the straw-paper,  
And pick

At your pale white gown;  
Or lift one of the green beads  
Of your necklace,  
To let it fall;  
Or gaze at your green fan  
Printed with the red branches of a red willow;  
Or, with one finger,  
Move the leaf in the bowl —  
The leaf that has fallen from the branches of the  
forsythia  
Beside you . . .  
What is all this?  
I know how furiously your heart is beating.

#### EXPLANATION

Ach, Mutter,  
This old, black dress —  
I have been embroidering  
French flowers on it.

Not by way of romance —  
Here is nothing of the ideal,  
Nein,  
Nein.

It would have been different,  
Liebchen,  
If I had imagined myself,  
In an orange gown,  
Drifting through space,  
Like a figure on the church-wall.

## THEORY

I am what is around me.

Women understand this.  
One is not duchess  
A hundred yards from a carriage.

These, then, are portraits:  
A black vestibule leading to a wrought-iron grille;  
A high bed sheltered by a canopy and curtains;  
A row of amber statuettes.

These are merely instances.

## CY EST POURTRAICTE, MADAME ST<sup>E</sup> UR-SULE, ET LES UNZE MILLE VIERGES

Ursula, in a garden, found  
A bed of radishes.  
She kneeled upon the ground  
And gathered them,  
With flowers around,  
Blue, gold, pink and green.

She dressed in red and gold brocade  
And in the grass an offering made  
Of radishes and flowers.

She said, "My dear,  
Upon your altars,

I have placed  
The marguerite and coquelicot,  
And roses  
Frail as April snow;  
But here"; she said,  
"Where none can see,  
I make an offering, in the grass,  
Of radishes and flowers."  
And then she wept  
For fear the Lord would not accept.

The good Lord in His garden sought  
New leaf and shadowy tinct,  
And they were all his thought.  
He heard her low accord,  
Half prayer and half ditty,  
And he felt a subtle quiver,  
That was not heavenly love,  
Or pity.

This is not writ  
In any book.

### TEA

When the elephant's-ear in the park  
Shriveled in frost,  
And the leaves on the paths  
Ran like rats,  
Your lamplight fell  
On shining pillows,  
Of sea-shades and sky-shades,  
Like umbrellas in Java.

## DISILLUSIONMENT OF TEN O'CLOCK

The houses are haunted  
By white night-gowns.  
None are green,  
Or purple with green rings,  
Or green with yellow rings,  
Or yellow with blue rings,  
None of them are strange,  
With socks of lace  
And beaded ceintures.  
People are not going  
To dream of baboons and periwinkles.  
Only, here and there, an old sailor,  
Drunk and asleep in his boots,  
Catches tigers  
In red weather.

## THE PLOT AGAINST THE GIANT

### FIRST GIRL

When this yokel comes maundering  
Whetting his hacker,  
I shall run before him,  
Diffusing the civilest odors  
Out of geraniums and unsmelled flowers.  
It will check him.

**SECOND GIRL**

I shall run before him,  
Arching cloths besprinkled with colors  
As small as fish-eggs.  
The threads  
Will abash him.

**THIRD GIRL**

Oh, la . . . le pauvre!  
I shall run before him,  
With a curious puffing,  
He will bend his ear then.  
I shall whisper  
Heavenly labials in a world of gutturals.  
It will undo him.

**THE WIND SHIFTS**

This is how the wind shifts:  
Like the thoughts of an old human,  
Who still thinks eagerly  
And despairingly.  
The wind shifts like this:  
Like a human without illusions,  
Who still feels irrational things within her.  
The wind shifts like this:  
Like humans approaching proudly,  
Like humans approaching angrily.  
This is how the wind shifts:  
Like a human, heavy and heavy,  
Who does not care.

## THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT A BLACKBIRD

### I

Among twenty snowy mountains,  
The only moving thing  
Was the eye of the blackbird.

### II

I was of three minds,  
Like a tree  
In which there are three blackbirds.

### III

The blackbirds whirled in the autumn winds.  
It was a small part of the pantomime.

### IV

A man and a woman  
Are one.  
A man and a woman and a blackbird  
Are one.

### V

I do not know which to prefer —  
The beauty of inflections  
Or the beauty of innuendoes,  
The blackbird whistling  
Or just after.

## VI

Icicles filled the long window  
With barbaric glass.  
The shadow of the blackbird  
Crossed it, to and fro.  
The mood  
Traced in the shadow  
An indecipherable course.

## VII

O thin men of Haddam,  
Why do you imagine golden birds?  
Do you not see how the blackbird  
Walks around the feet  
Of the women about you?

## VIII

I know noble accents  
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;  
But I know, too,  
That the blackbird is involved  
In what I know.

## IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,  
It marked the edge  
Of one of many circles.

## X

At the sight of blackbirds  
Flying in a green light,  
Even the bawds of euphony  
Would cry out sharply.

## XI

He rode over Connecticut  
In a glass coach.  
Once, a fear pierced him,  
In that he mistook  
The shadow of his equipage  
For blackbirds.

## XII

The river is moving.  
The blackbird must be flying.

## XIII

It was evening all afternoon.  
It was snowing  
And it was going to snow.  
The blackbird sat  
In the cedar-limbs.

## KELLER GEGEN DOM

Witness, would you —  
one more young man,  
in the evening of his love  
hurrying to confession, —  
steps down a gutter  
crosses a street  
goes in at a doorway,  
opens for you  
like some great flower  
a room filled with lamplight, —  
or whirls himself  
obediently to  
the curl of a hill  
some wind-dancing afternoon;  
lies for you in  
the futile darkness of  
a wall, sets stars dancing  
to the crack of a leaf —  
and, leaning his head away,  
snuffs (secretly)  
the bitter powder from  
his thumb's hollow,  
takes your blessing and  
goes home to bed?

Witness instead  
whether you like it or not  
a dark vinegar-smelling place  
from which trickles  
the chuckle of  
beginning laughter.

It strikes midnight.

## SPRING SONG

Having died  
one is at great advantage  
over his fellows —  
one can pretend.

And so, —  
the smell of earth  
being upon you too —  
I pretend  
there is  
something  
temptingly foreign,  
some subtle difference,  
one last amour  
to be divided for  
our death-necklaces, when —  
I would merely lie  
hand in hand in the dirt with you.

## SPRING STRAINS

In a tissue-thin monotone of blue-grey buds  
crowded erect with desire against  
the sky —

tense blue-grey twigs  
slenderly anchoring them down, drawing  
them in —

two blue-grey birds chasing  
a third struggle in circles, angles,  
swift convergings to a point that bursts  
instantly!

Vibrant bowing limbs  
pull downward, sucking in the sky  
that bulges from behind, plastering itself  
against them in packed rifts, rock blue  
and dirty orange!

But —

(Hold hard, rigid jointed trees!)  
the blinding and red-edged sun-blur —  
creeping energy, concentrated  
counterforce — welds sky, buds, trees,  
rivets them in one puckering hold!  
Sticks through! Pulls the whole  
counter-pulling mass upward, to the right,  
locks even the opaque, not yet defined  
ground in a terrific drag that is  
loosening the very tap-roots!

On a tissue-thin monotone of blue-grey buds  
two blue-grey birds, chasing a third,  
at full cry! Now they are  
flung outward and up — disappearing suddenly!

### EL HOMBRE

It's a strange courage  
you give me, ancient star —  
shine alone in the sunrise  
toward which you lend  
no part.

### NEW PRELUDE

I know only the bare rocks  
of to-day.  
In these lies my brown sea-weed,  
green quartz-veins bent through  
the wet shale;  
in these lie my pools left  
by the tide —  
quiet, forgetting waves;  
on these stiffen white star-fish;  
on these I slip barefooted!

Whispers of the fishy air  
touch my body:  
“Sisters!” I say to them.

## DANSE RUSSE

If I when my wife is sleeping  
and the baby and Kathleen  
are sleeping  
and the sun is a flame-white disc  
in silken mists  
above shining trees,  
if I in my north room  
danced naked, grotesquely,  
before my mirror,  
waving my shirt around my head  
and singing softly to myself:  
“I am lonely, lonely.  
I was born to be lonely.  
I am best so!”  
If I admire my arms, my face,  
my shoulders, flanks, buttocks,  
against the yellow, drawn shades, —  
who shall say I am not  
the happy genius of my household?

### BALLET

Are you not weary,  
great gold cross  
shining in the wind —  
are you not weary  
of seeing the stars  
turning over you  
and the sun  
going to his rest  
and you frozen with  
a great lie  
that leaves you  
rigid as a knight  
on a marble coffin?  
— and you,  
higher still,

robin,  
untwisting a song  
from the bare  
top-twigs,  
are you not  
weary of labor,  
even the labor of  
a song?

Come down — join me  
for I am lonely.

First it will be  
a quiet pace  
to ease our stiffness  
but as the west yellows  
you will be ready!

Here in the middle  
of the roadway  
we will fling  
ourselves round  
with dust lilies  
till we are bound in  
their twining stems!  
We will tear

their flowers  
with arms flashing!

And when  
the astonished stars  
push aside  
their curtains  
they will see us  
fall exhausted where  
wheels and  
the pounding feet  
of horses  
will crush forth  
our laughter.

## GOOD-NIGHT

In brilliant gas-light  
I turn the kitchen spigot  
and watch the water splash  
into the clean, white sink.  
On the grooved drain-board  
to one side is  
a glass filled with parsley —  
crisped green.

Waiting

for the water to freshen  
I glance at the spotless floor, —  
a pair of rubber sandals  
lie side by side  
under the wall-table,  
all is in order for the night.

Waiting, with a glass in my hand, —  
three girls in crimson satin  
pass close before me on  
the murmurous background of  
the crowded opera —

it is

memory playing the clown —  
three vague, meaningless girls  
full of smells and  
the rustling sound of  
cloth rubbing on cloth and  
little slippers on carpet —  
high-school French  
spoken in a loud voice!

Parsley in a glass,  
still and shining,  
brings me back. I take my drink  
and yawn deliciously.

I am ready for bed.

### PASTORAL

When I was younger  
it was plain to me  
I must make something of myself.  
Older now  
I walk back streets  
admiring the houses  
of the very poor:  
rooftop out of line with sides,  
the yards cluttered  
with old chicken wire, ashes,  
furniture gone wrong;  
the fences and outhouses  
built of barrel-staves  
and parts of boxes, all,  
if I am fortunate,  
smeared a bluish green  
that properly weathered  
pleases me best  
of all colors.

No one  
will believe this  
of vast import to the nation.



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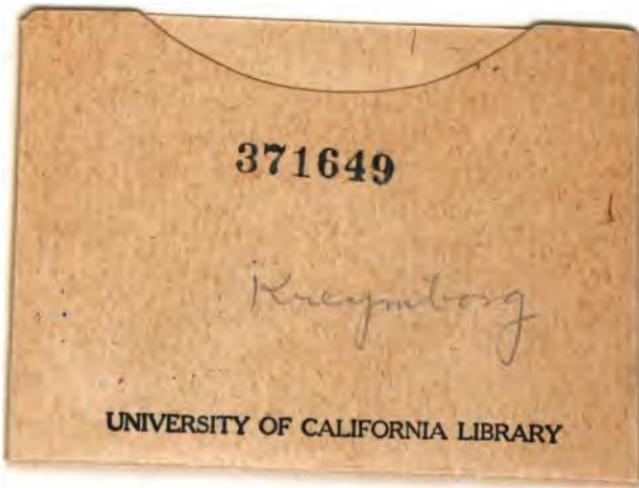
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